

# RIDGEFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Senator Formica, Senator Osten, and Representative Walker and Members of the Appropriations Committee:  
I sincerely appreciate your attention as I share my remarks regarding Bill HB-7027.

I am Kimberly Beck, Assistant Superintendent of Schools in Ridgefield. I have been a proud Connecticut public school educator for 24 years. I stand before you in hopes of serving in the next generation of school superintendents. But alas, as I look to the future, I find myself worried and dismayed by a proposed state budget that could quite possibly destroy our local public school systems.

**We are at a tipping point in education - and the stakes are higher than ever.** I am not talking about test scores and standards. I am talking about preparing our Connecticut youth by ensuring they all, every last child, have the skills and knowledge they will need to be successful in our rapidly changing world and the global economy. It is evident that our Connecticut children will have to be the ones to create our state's future.

As we watch companies like GE and Bristol Meyers leave Connecticut, so do those jobs and the people in them. In December, the U.S. Census Bureau reported Connecticut experienced a population drop for the third year in a row. From July 2015 to July 2016, the net migration out of Connecticut more than doubled from just five years ago. Many exiting residents did so for jobs, others for lower taxes. This means that our Connecticut youth will need to find new reasons to stay in this state and contribute to its sustainability. Rest assured, **it is in our schools** where our students are learning what it will take to be successful in the coming decades and help to rebuild our economic standing and viability. Simply put, investing in Connecticut schools is investing in Connecticut's economy and future.

For the record, I fully support the CT Association of Public School Superintendent's position regarding the following:

- There should be no burden of Teacher Retirement on any local municipality
- The proposed plan must include both free and reduced lunch OR the Husky Plan to appropriately indicate children of poverty;
- The minimum special education reimbursement percentage that a district must receive has to be at least 30% of the actual cost. This is significantly different that the 0-55% proposed sliding scale for reimbursement;

Presently, as proposed, the impact of the Governor's budget will be catastrophic for most school districts. For Ridgefield specifically, it represents a \$9.5 million and 10.59% increase. It is neither reasonable, nor viable to shift these costs to already struggling municipalities. It is clear that similar to signaling the need to respond to the changing economic climate, Governor Malloy must better understand the changing educational climate. The state budget should demonstrate that by appropriately funding our schools we can improve the state's economy and invest in Connecticut's future.

*Kimberly A. Beck*